

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN FOR THE INSTITUTIONALIZED ELDERLY

Volunteer Advocate Program

Overview

The New Jersey Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly was created by statute to preserve and protect the health, safety and welfare of seniors, 60 years of age or older, residing in long-term health care facilities. The Volunteer Advocate Program adds a new dimension to that mandate by establishing a visible presence within the facilities to represent the needs and concerns of residents. Volunteer Advocates are trained and certified by the Office of the Ombudsman to provide on-site advocacy to residents and their family members. Advocates complement the investigative function of the Ombudsman's Office by attempting to resolve issues at the lowest level in the long-term care facility and referring complaints of abuse, neglect and exploitation for investigation.

The Volunteer Advocate Program was started in 1993 as a pilot project in Essex, Hudson, Morris and Union Counties. Due to the success of the pilot, it was expanded in 1995 to include all 21 counties in New Jersey. Today there are over 180 Volunteer Advocates assigned to Long Term Health Care Facilities (LTCFs) throughout the state. The goal of the program is to recruit volunteers to be placed in all skilled nursing facilities throughout the state. The second phase of the program is to recruit and train volunteers to be assigned to Assisted Living Facilities to advocate for the rights of residents.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Volunteer Advocacy Program is to provide the best on-site advocacy service to assist long-term care residents, their family members and facility staff in proactively resolving quality of care and quality of life issues as close to the bedside as possible.

By utilizing teams of volunteers, professional staff and the local agency resources, the Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly Volunteer Advocate Initiative shall strive to improve levels of care received, to enhance the quality of life experienced and through consistent presence and advocacy, prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of New Jersey's elderly (60 years of age +) residents who reside in long-term care facilities throughout the state.

Major Functions of Volunteer Advocates

- 1.) Maintain Presence in Long-Term Care Facilities
- 2.) Respond to concerns and complaints to resolve through communication and resolution techniques

- 3.) Educate and inform residents, family members and staff about residents' rights and Ombudsman services
- 4.) Empower residents to advocate on their own behalf by exercising their rights in specific ways
- 5.) Advocate for the rights of residents who cannot advocate for themselves

POSITION DESCRIPTION VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE

Purpose: To promote the well-being and quality of life for residents 60 years of age and older, who reside in long-term health care facilities in New Jersey.

Responsible To: Regional Volunteer Coordinator and State Program Coordinator, Volunteer Advocate Program, Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Volunteer Advocates will make regular weekly visits to assigned long-term care facility to meet with residents;

Report any change in "activity" status within the long-term care facility to the Regional Volunteer Coordinator;

Educate residents and their family members about Ombudsman program and residents' rights;

Empower residents to advocate for themselves by exercising their rights in very specific ways;

Proactively resolve quality of care and quality of life issues within the long-term care facility through the facility liaison or "contact person";

Collaborate with Ombudsman field investigators in resolving issues that are referred for investigation by the Volunteer Advocate;

Report incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation directly to long-term care administrator and the Ombudsman Office; follow-up with written Report of Concern to the Ombudsman's Office;

Make collaborative site visits with Ombudsman Field Investigator, as needed, to review complaints or concerns;

*Maintain accurate records of problems/concerns reported; complete and submit monthly activity reports to Regional Volunteer Coordinator;
attend resident and family council meetings when invited;*

Attend facility's annual survey as invited by the Department of Health & Senior Services' survey team; attend exit conference and report findings to Regional Volunteer Coordinator;

Attend quarterly in-service/educational meetings held by Regional Volunteer Coordinator;

Participate in ongoing training on topics germane to the program and population being served.

QUALIFICATION:

Applicants must meet the following requirements for participation in the Volunteer Advocacy Program.

Twenty-one (21) years of age or older and possess a valid New Jersey driver's license or have access to public transportation.

Interested in promoting and protecting the rights of elderly long-term care residents.

Dependable, possess good verbal skills, including active listening skills.

Free from conflict of interest as determined by the Ombudsman Disclosure Statement.

Is not a habitual user of controlled dangerous substances; has never been convicted of a felony or pleaded guilty to an indictment, information or complaint alleging violation of a federal or state law.

TIME COMMITMENT:

Attendance at initial thirty-two (32) hour core training, pass certification exam with a grade of 70% or higher, participate in a minimum of six (6) hours of in-service trainings per service year; attend quarterly regional meetings.

Volunteer Advocates are requested to visit assigned long-term care facility a minimum of 4 hours per week.

**NJ OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN FOR THE INSTITUTIONALIZED ELDERLY
VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE PROGRAM APPLICATION**

DATE: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE# HOME: _____ WORK: _____ CELL: _____

WHY WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE? _____

HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER ADVOCACY PROGRAM? _____

HAVE YOU EVER VISITED A RELATIVE /FRIEND IN A NURSING HOME? _____

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCES: _____

WHAT DAYS AND TIMES ARE MOST CONVENIENT FOR YOU TO VOLUNTEER? _____

DO YOU HAVE TRANSPORTATION TO TAKE YOU TO THE ASSIGNED FACILITY WEEKLY? Yes No

WILL YOU BE ABLE TO SPEND AN AVERAGE OF FOUR HOURS WEEKLY? Yes No

ARE YOU WILLING TO KEEP RECORDS AND COMPLETE REPORTS? Yes No

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A VOLUNTEER BEFORE? IF SO, PLEASE LIST PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES:

(IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED, ATTACH SEPARATE SHEET.)

DATE: _____ FROM: _____ TO: _____

NAME OF ORGANIZATION: _____

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION: _____

DUTIES: _____

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

PLEASE LIST PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE IF APPLICABLE:

DATE: _____ FROM: _____ TO: _____

EMPLOYER: _____

TYPE OF BUSINESS: _____

JOB DUTIES: _____

DATE: _____ FROM: _____ TO: _____

EMPLOYER: _____

TYPE OF BUSINESS: _____

JOB DUTIES: _____

HAVE YOU EVER WORKED IN A LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY BEFORE?

WHERE?

IN WHAT CAPACITY?

EDUCATION

HIGH SCHOOL: COLLEGE: 1 2 3 4 (CIRCLE YEAR COMPLETED)

MAJOR AREA OF STUDY: DEGREE:

OTHER STUDIES:

ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU FEEL MAY BE USEFUL:

PLEASE LIST THREE REFERENCES WE MAY CONTACT; TWO PROFESSIONAL AND ONE PERSONAL (NO RELATIVES)

REFERENCE #1

NAME:

ADDRESS:

PHONE#

RELATIONSHIP: PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL

REFERENCE #2

NAME:

ADDRESS:

PHONE#

RELATIONSHIP: PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL

REFERENCE #3

NAME:

ADDRESS:

PHONE#

RELATIONSHIP: PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL

PLEASE RETURN THIS APPLICATION TO:
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN FOR THE INSTITUTIONALIZED ELDERLY
VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE PROGRAM
PO BOX 852
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0852

Consent to Criminal Background Check

Due to the nature of this volunteer advocate position, a criminal background check will assist the State Long-Term Ombudsman and his designee in making an informed decision about an applicant's qualifications for the Volunteer Advocate Program.

In assessing the pertinence of a criminal record or a conviction record, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman or his designee will consider all relevant factors including but not limited to the nature of the crime. The State Long-Term Care Ombudsman may exercise his discretion and provide you an opportunity to review and challenge the information obtained.

After the initial screening to become a Volunteer Advocate, you will receive a consent form asking for the information needed to conduct a criminal background check. The background check will be completed before you begin training.

Please note that this Consent to Criminal Background Check is confidential and will be placed in your Volunteer application file. The information obtained will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties. Upon requests from law enforcement agencies The State Long-Term Care Ombudsman shall disclose this information. In addition, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman shall disclose this information to third parties when federal and state laws mandate.

I have read and understand this consent form. I authorize the State Long Care Ombudsman or his designee to conduct a criminal background check. I agree to provide the Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly with the information necessary to complete a criminal background check. I understand if I falsify, withhold, or misrepresent any information or facts deemed necessary to complete a criminal background check the remedy may be immediate termination from the Volunteer Advocate Program

Print Name

Signature

Date

THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN FOR THE INSTITUTIONALIZED ELDERLY

OMBUDSMAN MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly (OOIE) is to secure and protect the rights, and to promote the dignity, of citizens age sixty and older residing in long-term health care facilities. The OOIE seeks to enhance the quality of life and improve the level of care provided to New Jersey's institutionalized elderly.

An individual may not serve as a Volunteer Advocate in the Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly when the following conditions exist:

- A person or a member of the person's immediate family has any financial or ownership interest in a long-term care facility where he/she plans to volunteer.
- A person has been terminated from employment by a long-term care facility within the last two years.
- A person has a family member who resides in the same long-term care facility in which he/she plans to volunteer.
- A person cannot volunteer in the long-term care facility in which he/she is employed.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime or other offense which has not been expunged by the Court, either in New Jersey or in any other jurisdiction? Yes_____ No _____

Applicants must be interviewed and successfully complete training and certification prior to placement as a long-term care facility Volunteer Advocate. Volunteer Advocates will be required to attend quarterly in-service meetings.

Print Name

Date

Signature